MINUTES

OF THE

WARREN ASSOCIATION,

AT THEIR

ANNUAL CONVENTION,

HELD AT

Mr. BLOOD's MEETING-HOUSE,

In NEWTON, 1786.

MASSACHUSETTS:
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M,DCC,LXXXVI.

MINUTES.

TUESDAY, September 12, 1786.

AT two o'clock, P. M. elder *Isaac Backus* preached the introductory ſermon, from *Hebrews*, iv. 16 : after which,

2. A Moderator and Clerk were choſen.

3. Letters were read from the ſeveral churches, and the following account was taken of the members added, diſmiſſed, excluded, or who have died the paſt year ; and of the preſent number in each church.

N. B. Miniſters marked by an † were not preſent. Thoſe churches which ſent neither meſſengers or letters ſtand as they did the laſt year, and are diſtinguiſhed by an *.

CHURCHES.	MESSENGERS.	Ad.	Dif.	Exc.	Died	No.
1ſt. Boſton,	*Samuel Stillman*, Philip Freeman, Richard Gridley,	40		1	2	190
2d. Boſton,	*Iſaac Skillman*, John Martin, William Kendall,	15				58
Bellingham,	*Noah Alden*, Aaron Leland,	2			1	55
Haverhill,	*Hezekiah Smith*,	6		9	1	117
* Warren,						83
1ſt. Middleborough,	*Iſaac Backus*, Nathaniel Shaw,		2	3		116
* 2d. Middleborough,						51
3d. Middleborough,	† *Aſa Hunt*, Ebenezer Nelſon,	1		3		191
Charlton,	*Nathaniel Green*, David Brown,		2			142
Wilbraham,	† *Seth Clark*,	6			11	154
* Aſhfield,	† *Ebenezer Smith*,					90
Montague,		6				38
Royalſton,	Simeon Chamberlain,	1	3	9	1	75
* Richmond,	† *Matterean Bellou*,					39
Wrentham,	*William Williams*, Joſeph Millard, Obediah Allen,	2		1		39
1ſt. Attleborough,	*Job Semands*,		1		2	74

BRITISH MUSEUM

CHURCHES.	MESSENGERS.	Add.	Dif.	Excl.	Died.	No.
* South-Brimfield,	† *Elijah Coding,*					233
* Woodſtock,	† *Biel Ledoyt,*					139
Chelmsford,	*Abiſhai Croſman,* Nathaniel Thatcher, Amos Fletcher,	9	2			104
* Barnſtable,						40
New-Salem,	*Samuel Bigelow,* Philip Hathway,	1	3	15	1	20
* Grafton,	† *Elkanah Ingalls,*					38
Leiceſter,	*Iſaac Beals,* Jonathan Newhall, John Lyons,	7		2		75
* Freetown,						97
Medfield,	*Thomas Gair,* Henry Plimpton, Aſa Maſon,	2			1	79
* Harwich,						47
* Killingly,						60
* Dudley,						33
* Southington,						18
* Rehoboth,	*John Hicks,*					100
Harvard,	*Iſaiah Parker,* Nathaniel Willard, Jonathan Lewis,	5		4	2	109
Newton,	*Caleb Blood,* Thomas Parker. Jeremiah Richardſon,				3	71
Salem, *(N. Hampſhire)*	*Samuel Fletcher,*	3		1		64
* Colerain,						26
* Northbridge,						25
Cambridge,	† *Thomas Green,* Thomas Williams, Gerſhom Cutter,	2				30
2d. Aſhford,	*John Rathbun,*	4	3	4		44
* Aſhburnham,						37
Providence,	† *James Manning,* *John Pitman,*	1		1	1	104
* Glouceſter,	† *Joſeph Winſor,*					81
Sturbridge,	*Jordan Dogde,* Jacob Sheppard,	13				80
Templeton,	Samuel Bryan, Daniel Norcroſs,	21				58
New-Rowley,	*William Ewing,* Moſes Tenny,	12				42
Bridgwater,	*George Robinſon,* James Perkins,	1	1			16
Newport,	† *Benjamin Foſter,*					69
		160	17	53	26	3462

The laſt church on this liſt was received the preſent year.

4. Received the minutes from the Aſſociation in *Philadelphia.*

5. Received letters and minutes from the *Shaftſbury, Woodſtock* and *Stonington* Aſſociations by their meſſengers, viz. *Peter Warden* and *Jonathan*

Richardſon, from *Shaftſbury*; *Thomas Baldwin* and *Ezekiel Powars*, from *Woodſtock*; and *Pardon Tillinghaſt* and *William Hammond*, from *Stonington* Aſſociation.

6. As we cannot aſcertain at what place the *New-Hampſhire* Aſſociation will meet the next year, voted, To omit ſending a letter.

7. Choſe meſſ'rs *Thomſon* and *Williams* to draw the letter to the correſponding Aſſociations.

8. Read the circular letter to the churches, and adjourned till to-morrow morning, 8 o'clock.

WEDNESDAY, September 13.

Met purſuant to adjournment.

9. Attended to the addreſs from a church at *Sutton*; and, after an inquiry into the proceedings of ſaid church, it was propoſed, Whether, conſidering all circumſtances, there is not ſufficient reaſon to drop the *Sutton* church from this body? Voted in the affirmative.

10. Read and approved the letter to the ſeveral Aſſociations: alſo, read and approved the circular letter to the churches.

11. Appointed meſſ'rs *Wilſon* and *Pitman* as our meſſengers to the *Philadelphian* Aſſociation; meſſ'rs *Parker*, *Croſman* and *Fletcher* to that of *Woodſtock*; meſſ'rs *Nathaniel Green* and *Dodge* to that of *Shaftſbury*; and meſſ'rs *Semands* and *Robinſon* to *Stonington* Aſſociation.

12. The late ſufferings of the church and ſociety in *Cambridge* were conſidered; upon which it was unanimouſly

Reſolved, That as our denomination, in this commonwealth, have been long oppreſſed by the Congregationaliſts, who have claimed the power of ſupporting religious miniſters by tax and compulſion: and as in conſequence of this, our brethren in *Cambridge*, beſides their time and trouble, have lately been at the expenſe of thirty-three pounds fifteen ſhillings, we earneſtly recommend, that each church in this Aſſociation raiſe a proportion of *that ſum*, as ſoon as may be, and forward the ſame to mr. *Iſaac Skillman*, of *Boſton*, or to mr. *Thomas Green*, of *Cambridge*, for the relief of thoſe ſufferers. And, conſidering it is in the *general* cauſe of liberty theſe friends have ſtood forth—a cauſe which concerns the citizens of *America at large*, and *particularly affects us*—Conſidering, alſo, that what they have done has evidently given a check to ſuch oppreſſions, and that nothing tends more to bring them to an end than a full conviction in our oppreſſors, that we are *united* in ſupporting each other in a determined refuſal to give any countenance to their arbitrary claims of power

over us. To these reasons, for assisting the aforesaid brethren, we likewise add, that we have formerly given encouragement to stand by each other in this cause, and are bound by sacred obligations to these expressions of obedience to Christ.

13. Query, If an ordained elder of any particular church is dismissed in friendship and fellowship to another church, and by them received, shall he be considered as their *regular minister* without further *ordination*, according to the *Baptist constitution?*

Answered, unanimously, in the affirmative.

14. It is recommended to the members of the churches to retire, every Lord's day morning, between the hours of seven and eight o'clock, for solemn prayer to God, that he will be graciously pleased, 1. To cause a general spread of the gospel among the nations of the earth. 2. That, in a particular manner, he will be pleased to revive his work in all the churches of our Lord Jesus Christ in *America*. 3. That he will graciously interpose in our publick affairs, and over-rule them for his own glory, and our peace, and happiness as a people.——It is with pleasure we inform the churches, that many pious people, in different parts of the continent, of various denominations, are thus engaged. Let us, then, unite with them, and at one time bow the knee to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus, who has never said, to the seed of Jacob, *Seek ye me in vain.*

15. Agreed on the following supplies:

Elder *Crosman*, at *Methuen*, the third Lord's day in October: elder *Robinson*, the last in November.

Elder *Semands*, the fifth Lord's day in October, at *Providence*: elder *Robinson*, 2d November.

16. Elder *Skillman* is appointed to prepare the circular letter to the churches for the next year.

17. The next Association is to be held at *Chelmsford*, the Tuesday after the first Wednesday in September, at two o'clock, P. M. Elder *Skillman* is chosen to preach the introductory sermon. If he fails, elder *Robinson*.

The CIRCULAR LETTER
To the Churches.

PREPARED BY MR. SMITH, OF HAVERHILL.

DEARLY BELOVED,

FROM a ſenſe of everlaſting love and effectual calling, by which we have been gathered to be a diſtinct and united people in the doctrines of our Saviour, we tenderly ſalute you, earneſtly deſiring that love, grace, mercy, and peace, through the knowledge of God the Father, and his beloved Son, Jeſus Chriſt, may greatly abound among you.

We have renewed cauſe humbly to acknowledge the gracious condeſcenſion of an indulgent God, manifeſted to us in our annual meeting, by which our ſouls have been quickened and refreſhed, our hope ſtrengthened, and the bond of true friendſhip again confirmed. We have been enabled, through grace, to tranſact the affairs which have come before us, in brotherly love and unanimity, and ſtrengthened to purſue the great object of the church's good, and the much-deſerted, neglected cauſe of Chriſt in the world.

With pleaſure we can inform you, that God hath done great things for many of the churches. To ſeveral of them, there have been large additions, we truſt, of ſuch as ſhall be ſaved.

Amongſt the various orders of beings known in the vaſt and extenſive empire of the Great Jehovah, there are certain rules eſtabliſhed, and a due ſubordination among the whole. Whenever this ſubordination is deſtroyed, and the rules violated, the beauty, order and harmony of that rank of beings are, to a great degree, loſt.

In civil government, good laws, well executed, are the ſtrength and ſupport thereof.

By noticing the divine conſtitution amongſt the Jews, under the former diſpenſation, we find the moſt exact order inſtituted; the violation of which was attended with the moſt ſevere puniſhments. Their rewards and puniſhments were proportioned, without the leaſt variation, according to their obedience or diſobedience to the divine inſtitutions, which evidences the purity and propriety of their laws, the dignity of their le-

giſlator, and the moral obligations they were under to the Supreme Gov-ernour of the univerſe. States, kingdoms and empires riſe or fall in their ſtrenth, glory and power, according to the ſpirit and execution of their laws. This was the caſe with the Jewiſh church; and may we not with propriety conclude, it is, and ever will be ſo with the Chriſtian church, which is ſuperiour to any incorporate body formed on earth? What we mean by the Chriſtian church is, Chriſt's church, which conſiſts of many diſtinct bodies of believers; each is called a particular church; which is, a number of profeſſed diſciples of Jeſus Chriſt, formed into a diſtinct body, by mutual compact; ſolemnly engaging to each other, to walk agreeably to the laws, precepts and examples of Chriſt, made known to us in the ſcriptures of truth; acknowledging Chriſt to be the only head of the ſame. Hence paſtors, teachers, elders, deacons and members, as different parts of this myſtical body, are obliged, by the laws of Chriſt's kingdom, to be faithful in the diſcharge of their reſpective duties; the neglect of which introduces a train of pernicious evils, which diſturb the peace, proſperity and happineſs of the church. The ſeeds of declenſion, animoſities and diviſions being thus ſowed, the church will languiſh, her officers be diſheartened, her members alienated from each other, and ſcattered; and, inſtead of her anſwering to that character, of being "fair as the moon, clear as the ſun, and terrible as an army with banners," ſhe will be clothed with ſhame, become enfeebled, and, like to a broken conſtitution attacked with ſtubborn diſorders, decline, waſte away, and die. To prevent ſuch a threatening cataſtrophe, let each one attend to his duty, and the whole be united in the proper exerciſe of goſpel diſcipline. Common experience teaches the neceſſity of paying proper attention to a diſordered member of our body, and to endeavour its reſtoration. Similar ſhould be the caſe of the church—If one member is diſordered it affects the whole body. Hence it is the duty and buſineſs of the whole to take the moſt ſpeedy care of the one diſordered; which care diſcovers that *union* which ſhould ever ſubſiſt amongſt them. Church diſcipline ſhould be wiſely, tenderly and ſtrictly maintained—which tends to the health of the body—and ſhould never be left to only one or a few, when it is the duty and buſineſs of the whole. Subordinate characters ſhould highly eſteem thoſe who are placed over them in the Lord, and are to know and obey them as ſuch. 1 Theſſ. v. 13. Heb. xiii. 17. Contracts and agreements amongſt them ſhould ever be held ſacred. The hands of paſtors ſhould be ſtrengthened, by the churches acting up to the Chriſtian character, and contributing liberally to their ſupport; by which means they might give themſelves wholly to the work of

the miniſtry. The ſin of covetouſneſs, when diſcovered in any member, reſpecting the unanimous ſupport of the miniſtry, ſhould be noticed as a breeding evil, which ought to be ſpeedily removed by the good and wholeſome rod of church diſcipline, that an equality might take place.

The ſupport of goſpel miniſters is ſo clearly and fully eſtabliſhed by Jeſus Chriſt, that it is generally acknowledged by our churches. But, alas! how few there are who faithfully and honeſtly diſcharge this known duty—which muſt be a crying ſin in the ſight of Heaven! Is not the neglect of this duty, joined with a departure from church diſcipline, one great cauſe of the preſent langour which prevails in many of our churches?

Brethren, receive from us the following exhortation:

Attend to the covenant and ſolemn obligations into which you have mutually entered; and wherein you have been deficient in the diſcharge of your covenant obligations, ſeek earneſtly to God by prayer for pardon; and be inceſſant in your ſupplications for renewed ſtrength and grace, that you might be faithful in future. Watch againſt all kinds of evil. Be ever ready to do good. As members of Chriſt's church, be ready to contribute your aſſiſtance in every branch of duty, eſpecially in diſcipline. Let covetouſneſs not be indulged amongſt you. Remember, he who withholdeth more than is meet tendeth to poverty. May you receive freſh anointings from the Holy Ghoſt; be filled with his gifts and grace, and adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour.

We conclude with the warmeſt recommendation of the inſpired penman's addreſs to the primitive believers—Finally, brethren, whatſoever things are true, whatſoever things are honeſt, whatſoever things are juſt, whatſoever things are pure, whatſoever things are lovely, whatſoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, if there be any praiſe, think on theſe things.

Signed by order of the Aſſociation.

HEZEKIAH SMITH, Moderator.
THOMAS GAIR, Clerk.

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